

# Town of Franklin

355 East Central Street  
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038-1352



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## PLANNING BOARD

Zoning Board of Appeal  
355 East Central Street  
Franklin, MA 02038  
Attn: Bruce Hunchard, Chair

Town Council  
355 East Central Street  
Franklin, MA 02038  
Attn: Tom Mercer, Chair

### **RE: 121 Grove Street – LIP Friendly CH40B Development**

Please accept, on behalf of the Franklin Planning Board, the following letter, outlining the Board's recommendations pertaining to the proposed friendly 40B development at 121 Grove Street. This letter sets forth the Planning Board's recommendations related to the Board's review of the project, pursuant to the Town's recently adopted guidelines for reviewing Friendly 40B projects – Local Initiative Program.

The Planning Board does not recommend the project as currently presented, however, the Planning Board has provided a list of recommendations it would like the applicant to consider implementing into their project design, making this project a true friendly 40B development; a compromise between Fairfield Residential and the Town of Franklin to create a project that would be better suited for the community. Recommendations below are set forth as it pertains to Franklin Town Code, Section 185-31 – Site Plan.

The Planning Board's recommendations are based on (1) the Board's review of the Friendly 40B application submitted on September 21, 2022, (2) presentation made by the applicant, Fairfield Residential, to the Planning Board on October 17, 2022, and (3) comments provided by Amy Love, Town Planner at the October 17, 2022 Planning Board meeting.

Requested Waivers pertaining to Planning Board:

- Section 185-13: Attachment 9 – Schedule of Lot, Area, Frontage, Yard and Height Regulations: Maximum Building Height of 3 stories. 60 feet may be permitted by PB Special Permit; Waiver request to allow 5 stories and 70 feet.
- Section 185-31: Site Plan and Design Review. Site Plan and Design Review Required; Waiver request for site plan and design review requirements.

Stormwater Management- Requires local approvals for stormwater management; Waiver is requested as project will be permitted under the MassDEP Stormwater Regulations. The Stormwater will be designed to comply with the local stormwater bylaw to the extent feasible.

#### Planning Board's Recommendations:

- Reduce the number of units – the largest residential development currently has 297 units, the average is closer to 280 units. Reducing the number of units will allow the applicant to decrease building footprints, allowing buildings to meet current setbacks, enable a reduction in building height, reduce impacts to wetlands, and alleviate visual impacts to the abutting Franklin State Forest.
- Lower the height of the buildings. . The applicant should clarify why a height waiver for 5 stories and 70 feet is requested, specifically, 70 feet. The tallest residential development is 50ft in height; there are no developments in Franklin that have been permitted at 70 feet.
- Buildings should be set back from the roadway as currently defined in the zoning bylaw. Typically, taller buildings should be located to the rear of the project, and not abutting the street for a more appealing project. However, in this instance, taller buildings, as proposed, will impact the experience for State Forest users, therefore, consideration should be given to the overall height of buildings within the project. Meet current setbacks in the Zoning Bylaw. Such tall buildings near not only the roadway but also the rear and side setbacks are aesthetically unpleasing and generally a problem for the Town.
- Concerned this project, specifically buildings 4 and 5, would significantly change the experience for users of the Franklin State Forest. The height of the buildings, as well as the distance from the Forest, would mean that anyone walking in the State Forest would be able to see the buildings, thus diminishing the experience. Buildings of this height don't otherwise exist in the town. In addition, any proposed lighting would have an impact on user experience at the State Forest and should be taken into consideration.
- To reduce the footprint and potential impacts to the Franklin State Forest, consider joining together the two buildings bordering the Franklin State Forest into one, and reduce building height.
- Since the ZBA is the review and approval board for 40B applications, the Planning Board understands formal site plan approval will not be granted via the Planning Board, however the applicant should consider meeting at least site plan specifications as defined in zoning by-law Chapter 185-31 regulations, if a formal application is submitted to ZBA, the applicant should be required to file with the Design Review Commission.
- Complete a formal traffic study. There is already a substantial amount of traffic on the streets in the proposed project area and if built, the project will likely create 1,500-1,800 additional cars per day on the roadways in the vicinity of the project, By reducing the amount of units, traffic impact to already congested roadway infrastructure will be reduced.
- Require local approvals for stormwater management. Franklin holds all applicants to the highest standards of review under its local stormwater management bylaws and exceptions shouldn't be made for any applicant.
- Reduce the impacts to Wetlands on the site, this can be done through implementation of smart growth practices, a reduction of building footprint, and/or reconfiguration of buildings and infrastructure need to support buildings.
- The Applicant should consider installing sidewalks from Kenwood Circle to the State Forest.

A project of this size does not appear to be a friendly 40B under the state's Local Initiative Program, which is one of the reasons why, the Planning Board recommends the project be scaled back in size. Doing so will result in decreased building size, both in overall bulk and height and therefore will help to reduce the number of units constructed. In addition, reducing the size of the project will allow the

development to remain within current zoning setbacks for not only the residential buildings, but also the accessory structures. An overall reduction to the size of the project will also mean those who enjoy the Franklin State Forest can continue to do so without their experience being diminished by large, multi-story buildings, light glare and other impacts that currently do not exist. A decrease in project size will create less impervious coverage, improve the ability to meet local stormwater management regulations and reduce impacts to onsite wetlands.

The Planning Board agrees there is a need for affordable housing in Town that utilizes smart growth practices, however, notes the project as proposed does not incorporate many of the basic smart growth principles embraced by the Town of Franklin as well as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Planning Board encourages and recommends the applicant utilize the concepts of smart growth more prevalently in the project design.

The Board looks forward to the applicant, as well as the Town Council and other Boards reviewing this project working together, to create a project that is reflective of the true meaning of a Friendly 40B project.

Thank you for providing the Planning Board an opportunity to provide feedback

  
Gregory Rondeau, Chairman  
Franklin Planning Board

CC: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator  
Conservation Commission  
Bryan Taberner, Director of Planning and Community Development  
Gus Brown, Building Commissioner  
Catherine Racer, Director DHCD  
Reiko Hayashi, LIP Director, DHCD